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An

Inaugural Dissertation

On

Phlegmasia Dolens

By

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Phlegmasia Dolens.

It appears from the researches of Hall, that neither Hippocrates nor more modern writers were well acquainted with this disease; nor was it well described until the time of Mauriceau.

We may infer from the writings of Rodrigues & Castro, and Wiseman that they had seen the disease; though their description of it is not good.

During the period which intervened between the publication of Mauri-

causes work and the death of Puzos the disease appears to have been known to various writers.

It may be proper to notice the different pathological views from the times of Mauriceau to the present.

All the writers from Rodriguez & Castro to Puzos have attributed this disease to a diminution or suppression of the lochia. And from Puzos to Mr. White it has been attributed to a deposition of milk.

Mr. White in his enquiry into the nature and causes of the intermixture of the lower extremities, advances a new theory of Phlegmasia Dolens.

He attributes this disease to an obstruction, detention, and accumulation of lymph in the limb; that the

Lymphatics are obstructed as high as where they enter under Poupart's Ligament; that the obstruction is occasioned by some accident occurring during labour; and that it is a local disorder and has a local cause.

In 1792 Juss of Gloucester published an essay on the swelling of the lower extremities, incident to lying in women; he attributes the disease to an obstruction of Lymph which he imagines is caused by the inflammation of the Lymphatics.

Dr Denman considers it an affection of the ~~glandular~~ Lymphatic and glandular system of the extremity; and is produced by the absorption of some irritating substance in the discharge from the ute.

=nus, the consequence of an unhealthy secretion of that organ.

Dr Ferriar supposes that there is a general inflammatory state of the absorbents of the limb by which they are rendered incapable of performing their functions. In a case mentioned in the third volume of his medical histories, he says that after the inflammation was reduced he could distinctly feel the lymphatics intertwined like a bundle of cords.

He thinks the disease may exist under circumstances unconnected with parturition. He does not think it impossible for the disease to occur previous to delivery. The violent pressure on the internal iliacs the accompanying veins and nerves, which con-

stantly takes place during delivery,
must undoubtedly be considered as a
powerful cause of lymphatic inflam-
mation.

He adds that the constitution is
much more irritable, and more liable
to febrile and inflammatory complaints
after delivery than before; the balance
of the circulating fluids is suddenly
and violently changed; that there are
new determinations, new sympathies
introduced while the body is in a state
of debility, agitation and anxiety. It can
not therefore surprise us under circum-
stances so peculiar that a set of ves-
sels commonly exempted from in-
flammation should take on an un-
usual disposition.

This theory is rejected by Dr. Keil.



He divides the causes into predisposing, and exciting. According to him the predisposing causes when the disease occurs during pregnancy or a short time afterwards appear to be

1.st Increased irritability and disposition to inflammation, which prevails during pregnancy and in a still higher degree afterwards.

2.nd The over distended or relaxed state of the blood vessels of the inferior part of the trunk, and of the lower extremities.

The exciting causes are

1.st Contusions and violent exertions of the muscles inserted into the pelvis and thighs.

2.nd Plethora occasioned by the application of cold or moisture.

3.rd Suppression or diminution of the



Lochia and of secretion of milk.

4.th Food taken in too large a quantity
or too stimulating.

5.th Standing and walking too much
before the arteries and veins of the lower
extremities have recovered from the ef-
fects of distension, which existed during
the latter months of pregnancy.

The proximate cause is suppo-
sed to consist in an inflammatory af-
fection, producing suddenly a conside-
rable effusion of serum and coagulable
lymph from the extralouds into the cel-
lular membrane of the Umb and un-
der the superior surface of the cutis.

Dr. Davis's opinion is that it is
a violent inflammatory affection of
one or more of the principal veins with-
in, and near the pelvis, producing an in-



increase thickness of their coats, the formation of false membranes on their internal surface; a gradual coagulation of their contents, and sometimes a distensive suppurative of their whole texture.

Dr. Boerhaave of New York thinks it an inflammation of the tube, compressing the muscles, cellular membrane, coats, lymphatic glands and nerves.

Dr. Ferri considers it to be an inflammation of the cellular membrane.

Four or seven or eight days after delivery the woman is seized with a sensation of pain and stiffness in the groin or on one side accompanied with considerable fever.

The part soon becomes swollen and is hotter than natural, and very tender to the touch, but not discoloured,



the pain increases and is sometimes
of the most excruciating kind and ex-
tends to the labium of the same side only,
and down the inside of the thigh to the
Ham, the Leg, the Foot, and the whole
limb. The swelling advances so rapidly
that in a day or two the Leg becomes
twice the size of the other, and is mo-
ved with difficulty, is hot and exqui-
sitely tender; it is smooth, shining and
pale and nearly uniform; it is not per-
ceptibly lessened by a horizontal posi-
tion like an edematous limb; when
pressed by the finger it is found to be
elastic, little or no compression being
made.

If a puncture be made in
the limb little or no fluid is discharged
... some cases; in other cases a small



quantity issues which soon coagulates;
in other cases a larger quantity escapes
and it does not coagulate, but the
whole of the fluid cannot be drawn
off in this way.

It does not always commence
in the groin, for it sometimes begins
in the leg, foot, hand, and arm.

After some days, from ten to eight
the febrile symptoms abate, and the swell-
ing, heat, pain, tension, weight and ten-
derness begin to abate; first about the
upper part of the thigh or knee, and af-
terwards in the leg and foot. Some in-
equalities are found in the tumor which
at first feel like indurated glands, but
on being nearly examined are not so
well defined as those of conglomerate
glands. The conglomerate glands are some



limbs distinctly felt, and are tender to the touch, but are seldom materially enlarged.

The Ecchymose signs, before having gradually disappeared, the pain and tension of the limb being much relieved, the swelling and tension being diminished, the patient is debilitated, and much reduced. The limb feels stiff, heavy, benumbed and weak, when the finger is pressed against it, it returns the impression.

It sometimes happens after the inflammation abates in one limb, the other is attacked in a similar manner and goes through the same process.

This disease terminates in resolution generally, though sometimes in gangrene or supuration.



Treatment.

Upon the whole then this disease may be looked upon as highly inflammatory in its first stage be the seat of this inflammation where it may. It therefore evidently requires active depletion, both from the sanguiferous system and from the bowels; together with the strictest antiphlogistic regimen, until the leg becomes adematous which will be known by its now retaining the impression of the finger when impressed. After this the disease rarely requires active depletion; though the system will not bear stimuli unless of a gentle kind and of a local nature.

Of these the solution of the os gall

in Brandy and the Gumes of burn-
ing resin should be prepared. The pa-
tient should be allowed the use of an-
imal food or any of the diffusible stim-
ulants with considerable caution
even after the leg has lost its tenderness
and much of its swelling. Indeed much
caution is required to prevent perma-
nent swelling; the roller should there-
fore be used for some length of
time.

